



PRESS RELEASE

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SHINGLES VACCINE

The GHA is introducing a new vaccine against Shingles.

The Shingles vaccine will be available to all persons at the Primary Care Centre during their 70th birthday year, or if older than 70, on their 79th birthday year. The vaccine is given as a one-off dose and does not need to be repeated.

Shingles, also known as 'Herpes Zoster', is a disease caused by the chicken pox virus and predominantly affects adults. The virus affects the nerves in the skin resulting in clusters of painful, itchy blisters, commonly on the chest, head, face and eye, that may turn into sores before they heal. Most people recover completely from Shingles after about a week, but in some cases, it can last much longer and develop complications. Permanent blindness can occur and in about one-fifth of the cases, an unpleasant condition called post-herpetic neuralgia can develop where the pain can last for several months or years.

Shingles is more common in people aged over 70 years. Complications are also more likely in older persons.

The person who gets Shingles has previously had chicken-pox, usually as a child, and the virus, which has remained dormant, has become reactivated, resulting in shingles. Shingles is not caught from new and cannot be caught from someone who has chicken pox or shingles. However, the virus in the shingles blisters can infect a person who has not had chicken pox and that person may develop chicken pox.

The shingles vaccine is about 65% effective in reducing the risk of getting shingles. Even if disease develops, symptoms are likely to be less severe. The shingles vaccine is very safe and meets UK and



European safety requirements. The vaccine is usually given in the upper arm and its side-effects are usually mild, consisting of symptoms like headache and local redness.

However, the shingles vaccine is not for everyone and certain people, such as those with immune disorders, may experience reactions. For this reason, a doctor will need to recommend the vaccine. If you are in the eligible age groups, it might be a good idea to ask your doctor about the vaccine at your next scheduled appointment.

Minister for Health, Dr John Cortes, commented, "At the GHA we are continuously looking at ways to improve the health and quality of life of all our citizens. This week we are promoting children's services, but at the same time we look to the more senior members of our community, for which this vaccine will be of great benefit. As Minister now also responsible for the Elderly, I am doubly pleased to be announcing this initiative."